

BEING FAMILY

Working together for
family-based care for children



Facilitation guidelines

Introduction

WELCOME

Welcome to “**Being Family**”. This facilitation pack has been written for Christians across the world who are working with vulnerable children in their communities. The aim is to encourage them in their calling to care for children, while at the same time expanding their remit to begin to support children in families.

There is growing evidence that children develop much better when they are in a family or are with family members. In a world where increasingly international trends are moving away from institutional care for children towards family based care, there is a need for the Christian community of care to re-orientate care for children away from the traditional model of long-term residential care in orphanages towards family based alternatives. **This trend is in line with biblical teaching since** family is the institution that God has chosen to use to express his personhood and the Scriptural values he has given us.

In 2009, the **UN developed Guidelines for Alternative Care for Children focusing on family based care. These are increasingly becoming enshrined in national guidelines and legislation.** As regulations change this will have an impact on many Christians working in institutions and/or residential care for children. As an example, Uganda, Approved Care Home Rules dictate that children should only be housed in institutional care for 6 months before alternative arrangements are made for children to be reunited with their families or into a family environment. These new national guidelines have forced homes and institutions working with children to change the way they work and to shift from long term residential care to short term emergency care for children.

These guidelines and legislation not only have an impact on the way that institutions operate, but are also beginning to influence **funding streams for work with children, with less money being directed towards orphanages and more funding for family based alternatives.**

The Christian faith based community, needs to be able to **respond to these changes**, but also **make the most of the opportunities** that it offers. Providing safe and nurturing temporary shelter for children who have become separated from their families, before family based care can be found, is a high calling. It potentially enables Christians to influence the lives of many more children.

At the same time the Church is in a key position to be able to work with **strengthening and supporting families**, (something that is much needed in today's fragmented world) and to provide safe and loving homes for children where they are not able to live with their own families.

‘**Being Family**’ is an attempt to raise awareness and understanding of family based care for children and is an introduction to the Christian community to ways in which models and practice in caring for children are changing. It does not attempt to give guidelines of how to implement change. These guidelines are found in **Better Homes for Children** which look at the practical aspects of family strengthening, alternative family based care for children and how to make the transition from long term residential care to short term emergency care for children.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

These facilitation guidelines are designed to be used flexibly, depending on the amount of time you have available. The workshop could be run in an evening, a half day or a whole day.

There is a **PowerPoint presentation** to accompany the resources and activities contained in this booklet. Use the presentation to communicate **core information** and to introduce **interactive activities**. You will find suggestions for activities in each section of this guide. Some of the activities are **Core activities**: these will ensure you cover the main content of the course. Other activities are **Optional activities**, so that you can choose what to include as time allows. Timings are given for activities as a guide only. Please adapt to your setting.

Affirming our calling to work with children

Facilitators Notes

“A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families”
Psalm 68:5-6

Encouraging participants in their calling

The majority of participants attending ‘Being Family’ will be working with children and are likely to have been motivated by a calling from God to work with vulnerable children or orphans. We want to begin this training by affirming the calling that God has placed on the lives of those working with vulnerable children.

There will be a strong sense among participants that they are doing everything in the best interests of the child. Some elements of this training may challenge the way that they do things. This may be particularly true of those who may be running residential care or orphanages. The aim will be to gently make them aware that although their calling never changes, the way that it is implemented sometimes has to change.

Evidence is increasingly indicating that children thrive best in families and that institutional care can actually harm children. However in facilitating ‘Being Family’ it is important to be sensitive and it is very important to affirm participants in their calling and what they are doing for children. As participants are guided throughout different sessions to discover that family-based care is best practice, and as they are confronted by changing laws and regulations that may affect the way that they work, they need to be assured that their calling to serve vulnerable children need not change. At the same time as trends shift, participants working with children in residential care may find that their funding is falling away. As participants are motivated to want the very best for children in their care, there needs to be realisation that offering children a safe and loving family or enabling them to return to their families (if they have been separated), is often the best way that children will thrive and develop their full potential.

Prayer and encouragement

- Encourage participants to support and pray for one another.
- Begin the workshop by meditating on God, his purposes for children and his call to his people to care for children as he cares for us
- Keep returning to this vision.

Affirming our calling to work with children

Aim: Encourage participants in their work with children

Core

Activity 1- Revisiting your calling (10 minutes)

Ask participants to reflect and write down

- Why did you 1st begin to work with children?
- What is your motivation for working with children?
- What are the hopes/aspirations you have for the children you work with? You could ask them to complete the sentence I want every child in my care to.....

Ask participants to share what they have written in pairs and then to pray for the children and for one another.

God's view of Family

Facilitators Notes

As Christians, at the core of everything we do is a belief in a God expressed through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The God we follow is seen as all-knowing, all-powerful, morally perfect and defined by love. He is at the centre of all we do and as such, our work should imitate His nature. This includes our work with children.

The Bible offers insight into how God created and views children so we may better understand our responsibility towards them. Our attitude towards children should reflect God's own attitude and our actions should reflect His character. We know through our reading of scripture that children are precious to God. Psalm 139 v 13-14 reminds us how God creates each child uniquely and Matthew 18 v 5 shows Jesus welcoming children. Our work must reflect this value for each individual child. We are also called to protect and defend them. Part of this means that we are to do all we can, to see children receive justice for wrongs done to them. In our work with children, we have a responsibility to make sure that they are safe from harm. This is called safeguarding.

Every child born into this world was created to be a son or daughter to someone and each child has a context, which is their family and their community. Children who are cared for by families within communities are more likely to thrive than those who are separated from their families. This is because children growing up in families generally receive the kind of love, attention, and care essential to their well-being. The physical family therefore is the most important building block to human society and is the most natural and conducive environment for a child to grow, develop and thrive. Significantly, the family is the only institution designed by God for the care of children. A healthy family is the best environment for a child to develop and thrive. The biblical model of family values long-term sexual faithfulness between husband and wife, trans-generational (e.g. grandparents/aunts/uncles) support and moral education of children in a loving framework. The wholesome interplay of these priorities provides the best possibility for children to flourish.

The Bible is also very clear about God's call on us to serve the needs of those children who are vulnerable, specifically those who lose parents. The word 'orphan' appears 30 times in scripture where we are asked to be kind and generous to fatherless children. Christians have a strong tradition of responding to the plight of orphans and vulnerable children. In both the Old and New Testament, the call upon the community of faith is to support orphans in the context of their families and communities. In the Bible, there is no precedence for a model, which removes children from their communities in order to respond to their needs. Instead, throughout scripture, there is emphasis on the importance of relationships and of family. "He sets the lonely in families." (Psalm 68:6)

The Biblical model of family with its roots in Middle Eastern culture shares much with the extended family model. Across the world, there is still great emphasis on the value of the extended family and many cultures have a long tradition of families caring for children of family members, even if the parents of a child have died. What we see from successful Biblical family life, implies that there are more generations present than just two involved in the raising of the child.

But more than this, the whole concept of family seems to derive from God Himself. "For this reason, I kneel before the Father from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." Ephesians 3:14-15. As Christians we relate to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in relationship with one another. We believe in a loving Father who through Christ, sought us, adopted us, and invites us to live as His sons and daughters (1 Jn 4:19; Eph 1:5; Gal 4:6; 2 Cor 6:18). Our calling as Christians is to get alongside families and support them to care for their children as God cares for us.

Summary

Family is the institution that God has chosen to express his personhood and Scriptural values he has given us. It is also the context that the Bible presents for nurturing children.

God's view of Families

Aim: For participants to discover that God's purpose is for children to be in families

Core activities

Activity 1) What is a family? (10 minutes)

Get participants to brainstorm the things that make a family.

Ask participants to draw themselves on a piece of paper and then draw their family around them. Who constitutes their family?

In groups discuss:

- Who is family in our culture/context?
- On a piece of flip chart paper, draw two columns with the headings: 1) The elements we like about family in our culture, 2) The elements that are difficult about family in our culture. As groups discuss and fill out the columns

Activity 2) What is a biblical pattern of family? (20 minutes)

Divide participants into 3 (or more) small groups. Each group should have access to a Bible, pen and paper. Give each group one of the following defining features of the family, as presented in the Bible.

- Marriage (one man and one woman in a life-long committed relationship to each other; this is the only place for sexual activity)
- Trans-generational support (many generations involved in bringing up children and supporting parents)
- Moral education within a loving framework

Ask each group to think of verses or episodes in the Bible that illustrate these values.

Get each group to share what they have discovered.

Working in pairs, get participants to discuss the benefits to children and families of this pattern of family life. How similar is this to the way family operates in your culture?

Join with others to share ideas.

God's view of Families

Aim: For participants to discover that God's purpose is for children to be in families

Optional
activities

Activity 3) Where does the idea of family come from? (15 minutes)

Get participants to read Ephesians 3 v. 14-15 and reflect individually:

Where does the idea of family and fatherhood come from, according to this verse? Why is this important? What does it mean to you that God is your Father? What does it mean to you that family comes from God?

In small groups, write '*God is Father*' in the middle of one sheet of paper; write '*God is family*' in the middle of another. Around the outside write down thoughts, reactions and implications of this for you personally and your work with children to create a spider diagram, where lines link your ideas to the main theme in the centre of the page.

Activity 4) What is your experience of family? (10 minutes)

As an individual, reflect on your childhood. In what ways was your experience closest to God's pattern for children in families? In what ways was it most different? What impact (positive and negative) can you see in your adult life?

Activity 5) What happens when families are not working? (15 minutes)

- As a whole group, brainstorm ways you often see families failing to work according to God's pattern.
- Working in 2s or 3s, get participants to choose one of the situations. Try to identify:
Root cause; Effects on children; Possible ways to restore God's pattern for family life (or get closer to it)
- Join with another small group to share ideas.

Why Families Promote Healthy Child Development

Facilitators Notes

The best possible environment for a child to thrive – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and developmentally – is usually within the family and as part of a community. Children need a sense of permanence, which a family offers. Permanence is about having a ‘family for life’ and a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Childhood represents a hugely important time for each of us. This is where the foundations for every person’s life are laid. The most important years for a child’s survival, growth and development are when the child is in the womb through to the early years, with the fastest period of growth occurring during the first three to four years of life when the child’s brain is rapidly growing and adapting to the environment. The first three years of life are considered a ‘sensitive period’, when a child needs to receive intimate emotional and physical contact. If this is not present, there is a risk that the child’s development will be significantly impaired.

Each of us was created with a capacity to receive love from a mother and father. Unconditional love is the most important need of every child and the cornerstone of all child-rearing. This is most easily expressed where one or two parents can respond to the individual needs of the child. Strong emotional and physical attachment to at least one primary caregiver (usually a child’s mother) is critical to a child’s development.

Attachment: Research has shown that for normal emotional and psychological development, babies need a primary caregiver who is the person who responds quickly, consistently and lovingly to their demands. This is so they learn that their needs for food, clean nappies, pain relief, etc. will be met. This allows them to develop trust and attachment. Successful attachment is essential for the child’s development of self-esteem and self-worth.

Children who have experienced consistency and care from one or two attachment figures (usually parents) will tend to form trusting relationships in the future. It is easier for a secure child with loving and caring parents to get along well with new people than for an insecure child. Children who have not had a significant attachment figure in their lives can suffer from attachment disorders which will continue into their adult lives and can result in them being withdrawn and not able to develop trusting relationships.

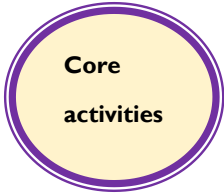
Resilience: As children grow, resilience is associated with the presence of various things in children’s lives that enable them to cope with their experiences in a helpful way. These are called protective factors or resilience factors. The family is one of the most significant factors for children’s resilience. Research has established that resilience in children is greater when they have access to at least one caring parent, caregiver or other supportive adult who loves and accepts them unconditionally.

Separation: A child who is separated from their family, home and belongings, and brought to unfamiliar caregivers, is likely to suffer from shock, fear, anger, sadness, and anxiety. This will be particularly traumatic if the separation is sudden, without explanation, and the move is not wanted. Boys, children under 4, and children who have experienced several moves, are particularly vulnerable. If unresolved, children will either act this stress out in aggressive or attention-seeking behaviours, or internalise their feelings and become withdrawn and depressed.

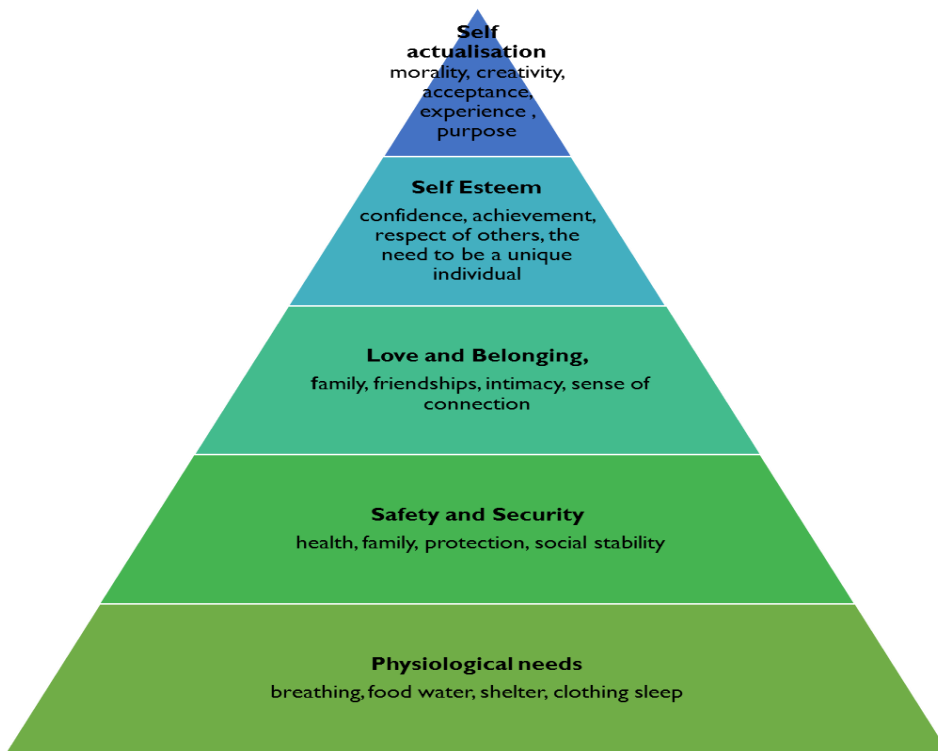
There is evidence that placing a child in institutional or residential care, away from their family, can hinder a child’s development. This is because child care institutions often lack the close relationships and day-to-day interactions within a family that provide the foundation for a child’s social and emotional development, self-image, and sense of belonging. Whilst well-run residential care centres can meet the children’s physical and educational needs, they are not always equipped to meet a child’s emotional and psycho-social needs. This can result in children suffering adverse effects such as developmental delays, attachment disorders, behavioural problems, low self-esteem and struggles with their sense of identity and belonging.

Why Families Promote Healthy Child Development

Aim: For participants to understand the role of the family in healthy child development.
To introduce the importance of attachment figures in the lives of children.



Activity 1) What children need (15 minutes)



Ask participants to write a statement of the needs of children that their work seeks to meet.

Explain Maslow's Hierarchy of need.

Invite participants to work in groups to compare their statements with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Where would they place their statement on this diagram?

Are there any common features of need that occur as one progresses up the pyramid?

How does a family provide the context for meeting these needs? What if the family has broken down or children have been separated?

How does this model of needs relate to what the Bible shows us about children's needs?

Why Families Promote Healthy Child Development

Aim: For participants to understand the role of the family in healthy child development.

To introduce the importance of attachment figures in the lives of children.

Facilitators.

It is important to be sensitive to the fact that participants may have had very different childhood experiences and some of them may not have had strong attachment figures in their lives. You should select activities based on your knowledge of the group.

Optional
activities

Activity 1) Where do you get your sense of identity from? (15 minutes)

Ask participants to think about where they get their identity from. Get participants to draw themselves in the centre of a piece of paper and then draw concentric circles extending outwards to represent the areas where they get their identity from. Discuss in pairs

Activity 2) Who had most influence on you in your life as a child? (25 minutes)

A Venn diagram uses circles as an easy way to identify relationships among people. By the size of the circle, you can show the importance of the person. The bigger a circle is, the more important is a person. The closeness of the circles illustrates how much interaction there is between people. The closer the circle is, the more interaction or more attachment there is.

Ask participants to draw themselves in the centre of a piece of paper as a child aged between 0-11. Around each drawing of the child, get participants to draw circles representing those people who had most influence on their lives as a child. The closer the circles are to the picture of the child, the most interaction there was with the child. The larger the circle, the larger the influence

Get participants to share their Venn diagrams in groups. Are there any consistencies across the group in terms of the key people in their lives as children? Who are these people?

Activity 3) – The features of attachment (20 minutes)

As an individual, write a short letter to the person who had the most positive influence in your life as a child, thanking them for who they have been and what they have done for you

What did you discover about attachment and its value?

Could you have received the same things in your life if you had been in a home with 20 brothers or sisters

Resources

Video Stephen Ucembe, Kenya Society of Care Leavers, shares his personal experience growing up as an orphan in institutional care at the Christian Alliance for Orphans' Summit IX on May 2, 2013. <http://faithtoaction.org/media/videos/>

Summary

Each of us was created with a capacity to receive love from a mother and father. Unconditional love is the most important need of every child and the cornerstone of all child-rearing. This is most easily expressed where one or two parents can respond to the individual needs of the child. Strong emotional and physical attachment to at least one primary caregiver (usually a child's mother) is critical to a child's development.

Why are Children Separated from their Families

Facilitators Notes

The world is changing rapidly. Where there were around 5 billion people in 1990, by 2050 there will be nearly 10 billion – more than 2.6 billion of them younger than 18. Many children born today will enjoy vast opportunities unavailable 25 years ago. But not all will have an equal chance to grow up healthy, educated and able to fulfil their potential. These words from the 2015 State of the World's Children report present us with a challenge. As Christians, our desire should be to see every child reach their full God-given potential across every nation of the world.

One of the greatest contributors to the vulnerability of children around the world is separation from the love, care and protection of their family. Growing up in the care of a loving and nurturing family, provides children with love, a sense of belonging and the connection to a community, shared history and culture.

It is estimated that 140 million children are orphans worldwide (UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/media>). Of the 140 million children estimated to be orphans, only about 9 per cent have lost both parents. Millions more children are at risk for being separated from their parents for reasons including armed conflict, natural disaster, disease, poverty, disability, violence and discrimination.

Children separated from their parents and families because of conflict, population displacement or natural disasters are among the most vulnerable. Separated from those closest to them, these children have lost the care and protection of their families in the turmoil, just when they most need them. They face abuse and exploitation, and even their very survival may be threatened. On top of this, they may assume adult responsibilities, such as protecting and caring for younger sisters and brothers.

Many children in all parts of the world today are serving as household heads – as 'carers' for one or both parents and/or taking day-to-day responsibilities in the family home due to parental illness or other incapacity. There have always been children living in households without an adult caregiver, however since the 1980's, HIV and AIDS have had a terrible toll on children and their families. During the 30 years of the global HIV epidemic, an estimated 17 million children lost one or both parents due to AIDS. Ninety percent of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa.

While, abuse, domestic violence, child labour or trafficking may be some of the reasons that children leave home, poverty and lack of access to education are often quoted as reasons why children are placed in residential institutions. Of the estimated 2 million children living in institutional care, 80% of them have one living parent. At least four out of five children in residential care have one or both parents at home.

The aim of the session is to get participants to think through why children are separated from their families in their context and whether anything about their attitudes towards the family prevents them from wanting children to be in family based care.

Lion, The film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RNi9o06vqo>

This film is a true story about five-year old Saroo who gets lost on a train which takes him thousands of kilometers across India, away from home and family (his mother and siblings). Saroo comes from a poor family. Saroo and his brother Guddu steal coal from freight trains to trade for milk and food. His mother is a manual labourer collecting rocks and he has no father.

Saroo becomes separated from his brother after falling asleep on a train, which does not stop until it reaches Kolkata. He is unable to get back home because he does not understand the local Bengali language. Instead he must learn to survive alone in Kolkata, before ultimately being adopted by an Australian couple. Twenty-five years later, armed with only a handful of memories, his unwavering determination, and a revolutionary technology known as Google Earth, he sets out to find his lost family and finally return to his first home.

This film is a complex *movie*, with profound themes of home and identity and the importance of family attachment. Despite coming from a very poor background and being adopted into an affluent and loving family, with much better prospects, Saroo never loses his yearning for home.

Why are children separated from their Families

Aim: To enable participants to think through their perception of family, why children become separated from their families and how they are engaging with families of children in their care

Core activities

Facilitator This activity gets people moving as well as promoting discussion. Do this before showing the slide for this section.

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

As the facilitator, draw a happy face on a piece of paper and place it on the wall on one side of the room. Draw a sad face on another piece of paper and place that on the opposite wall to the happy face. If participants stand near the happy face, it means that they strongly agree with the statement. If participants stand near the sad face, it means that they strongly disagree with the statement. If they stand between the two faces, it means they neither agree nor disagree.

Ask participants to stand in a position which shows how strongly they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- As Christians we are called to care for orphans
- An orphan is a child without living parents
- Getting access to education is more important for a child's life than being in a family
- Poor, single parents neglect their children
- Adoption into a rich family gives children better stability
- Children should not be left to look after their siblings
- 80% of children in orphanages have one living parent
- A child who is being abused must never be left in that situation

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

As a whole group, discuss and record why children become separated from their families in our culture/context? Rank the reasons in order of importance through a group voting system.

Optional activities

Activity 3 (20 minutes)

Get participants into groups where they or the organisation they represent are doing similar work with children.

Get groups to discuss where/ how they are currently engaging with the families of children in their care. On a piece of flip chart paper, draw two columns with the headings 1) Where/How we are currently engaged with families, 2) Where/How we could engage more with families. Get the groups to discuss and fill out the columns.

Resources

Trailer Lion, The film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RN19o06vqo>

Changing Trends in Working with Children

Facilitators Notes

Ideas about the best care for children are changing. There is growing evidence across the world that children develop best when they are in a family or are with family members. As a result of this, international guidelines have been drawn up by the United Nations about the care of vulnerable children. These guidelines are now being adopted by countries which have signed up to the United Convention on the Rights of the Child and are becoming written in to national legislation.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): This is the most influential global legal instrument for ensuring children are protected and have all they need to thrive and flourish. All children and young people up to the age of 18 years have all the rights in the Convention. Some groups of children and young people – for example, those living away from home, and young disabled people – have additional rights to make sure they are treated fairly and their needs are met. The UNCRC is separated into 54 'articles'. They are connected to each other, and all are equally important. The rights are divided in the following way.

- **life, survival and development**
- **protection** from **violence, abuse or neglect**
- an **education** that enables children to **fulfil their potential**
- be **raised by**, or have a **relationship with, their parents**
- **express their opinions** and be **listened to**.

Each country has national laws and guidelines on the care of children, which are based on the UNCRC. These look at a) ensuring children's needs are met, b) that children are kept safe from harm, c) that they have education and positive experiences that enable them to grow and develop and d) that they are able to participate in society

UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children 2009: The UNCRC makes clear the importance of a family environment for children and that it is the States' responsibility to ensure alternative care for all children deprived of a family environment (Article 20). These international guidelines were designed to provide further details on how Governments should respond to the needs of children separated from their families. The guidelines encourage the return of children to the care of their families or finding alternative family based solutions. Many countries have drawn up policies and regulations on the alternative care for children, based on these guidelines.

A Summary of some of the articles in the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children which are most pertinent to network members are included.

As these guidelines become adopted into national legislation, some organisations and churches working with children will be required to change their practice. At the same time funding trends are changing so that donors are moving away from funding residential care for children to supporting children in families.

In a world where increasingly international and national trends and funding are moving away from institutional care for children towards family based care, there is a need for the Christian community to re-orientate its care for children away from the traditional orphanage model towards family based alternatives.

Changing Trends in Working with Children

Aim: To make participants aware of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and changing national legislation and get them to consider how it will affect their work with children

Facilitators notes: There is an assumption that participants will be familiar with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. If not then activities will need to be added which examine the UNCRC in detail. Examples of activities can be found in Understanding Gods Heart For Children

Lead in Recap with participants on what the UNCRC is and explain that that the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for children are drawn up from Article 20 of the UNCRC. These guidelines are increasingly becoming enshrined into national legislation and articles on alternative care for children can regularly be found in:

- **Constitution** (often includes a section on children)
- **Children's Act/ National Plan of Action for Children** (Often based on UNCRC)
- **Alternative Care Guidelines** (Based on UN guidelines)
- **National Child Protection Laws**
- **National Children's Home regulations**

Optional activities

Cut up the articles and stick them on the walls around the room.

Invite participants to do the following 3 activities to familiarise themselves with the content of the guidelines.

Activity 1 Fill in the gaps: (15 minutes)

1. _____ care facilities should be progressively phased out.
2. The _____ is responsible for protecting the rights of the child and ensuring appropriate alternative care if the child's own family cannot.
3. Alternative care for young children, especially those under 3 years, should be in _____ settings.
4. The _____ is the best place for the growth, well-being and protection of children.
5. Removal of a child from the family should be a measure of _____ and should wherever possible, be _____

Activity 2 Which article do I need? (15 minutes)

Write the number(s) of the most relevant article(s):

1. Should a child in need of alternative care be moved to a distant part of the country? _____
2. A family is too poor to take care of their child. _____
3. How should we select the most appropriate setting to care for a child who cannot be reintegrated with family? _____
4. I want to encourage activities that will strengthen families in my area. _____
5. In what situation should a child be placed in a large residential care facility? - _____

Changing Trends in Working with Children continued

Activity 3 (20 minutes)

If possible have the following documents available with relevant sections

- **Constitution** (often includes a section on children)
- **Children’s Act/ National Plan of Action for Children** (Often based on CRC)
- **National Children’s Home regulations**

C. UN guidelines in my work questionnaire (to be completed for as many articles as time allows)

Article number	Corresponding national legislation	Strongly agree	This surprises me	Strongly disagree	Why?	I need to change my practice	How?

Activity 4 - Funding Implications (10 minutes)

As a whole group talk through how the UN Alternative Care for Children Guidelines are impacting national legislation and the licensing of residential care for children and how it is affecting donor choices which will impact funding work

Changing Trends in Working with Children

Summary of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

The following is a summary and simplified version of some of the articles in the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children, which will have most impact on the way we work with children.

The Child and the Family

3. As the family is the best place for the growth, well-being and protection of children, efforts should be about enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents, or when appropriate, other close family members.
5. Where the child's own family is unable, even with appropriate support, to provide adequate care for the child, or abandons or relinquishes the child, the State is responsible for protecting the rights of the child and ensuring appropriate alternative care.

Alternative Care

11. All decisions concerning alternative care should take full account of maintaining the child as close as possible to his/her home, in order to facilitate contact and potential reintegration with his/her family and to minimize disruption of his/her educational, cultural and social life.
14. Removal of a child from the care of the family should be seen as a measure of last resort and should, whenever possible, be temporary and for the shortest possible duration.
15. Financial and material poverty, should never be the only justification for the removal of a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care, or for preventing his/her reintegration, but should be seen as a signal for the need to provide appropriate support to the family.
16. Attention must be paid to protecting children without parental care, and giving them access to education, health and other basic services, the right to identity, freedom of religion or belief, language and protection of property and inheritance rights.
22. In accordance with the predominant opinion of experts, alternative care for young children, especially those under the age of 3 years, should be provided in family-based settings
23. While recognizing that residential care facilities and family-based care complement each other in meeting the needs of children, large residential care facilities should be progressively phased out.

Promoting Parental Care

32. States should pursue policies that ensure support for families in meeting their responsibilities towards the child and promote the right of the child to have a relationship with both parents including
- a) Family strengthening services, such as parenting courses and sessions, the promotion of positive parent-child relationships, conflict resolution skills, opportunities for employment and income generation and, where required, social assistance;
- (b) Supportive social services, such as day care, mediation and conciliation services, substance abuse treatment, financial assistance, and services for parents and children with disabilities.

Changing Trends in Working with Children

(c) Youth policies aiming at empowering youth to face positively the challenges of everyday life, including when they decide to leave the parental home, and preparing future parents to make informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and to fulfil their responsibilities in this respect.

d) Support and services should be available to siblings who have lost their parents or caregivers and choose to remain together in their household

Promoting family reintegration

49. In order to prepare and support the child and the family for his/her possible return to the family, his/her situation should be assessed by a duly designated individual or team with access to multidisciplinary advice, in consultation with the different actors involved (the child, the family, the alternative caregiver), so as to decide whether the reintegration of the child in the family is possible and in the best interests of the child, which steps this would involve and under whose supervision.

Residential Care

123. Facilities providing residential care should be small and be organized around the rights and needs of the child, in a setting as close as possible to a family or small group situation. Their objective should generally be to provide temporary care and to contribute actively to the child's family reintegration or, if this is not possible, to secure his/her stable care in an alternative family setting

Inspection and Monitoring

128. Agencies, facilities and professionals involved in care provision should be accountable to a specific public authority, which should ensure, frequent inspections comprising both scheduled and unannounced visits, involving discussion with and observation of the staff and the children

How to care for orphans and vulnerable children

Facilitators Notes

It is increasingly recognised that the best way to provide care for children is to support them in their families and if children become separated from their families that they are enabled to reunite with them or quickly be placed in a family environment. A continuum of care provides an overview of the care options for children who have been separated from their parents. It places a high priority on family care and preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families, through family strengthening. This is by addressing the causes of why children have become separated from their families. It also recognises the important role that short term transitional or emergency shelter can play, before children are either reunited with their families or placed into alternative family care for children. Alternative family care can include Kinship care, fostering and adoption, but also a range of other options, which can allow children to have access to a family environment.

The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children are based on the continuum of care model and encourage Governments to support efforts to keep children in, or return them to, the care of their family or, only after failing this, to find another appropriate and permanent solution. Many Governments have adopted this framework and have incorporated it into national guidelines.

The continuum of care involves the following elements. Throughout the safety and best interests of the child are a priority

Strengthening Families to Prevent Separation:

Recognising that children thrive and develop best in the nurturing care of a family, the best way to serve children is to **strengthen the capacity of families** to care for them. The first stage in the continuum of care is to keep the family together to prevent children from becoming separated from their families.

As poverty or relationship breakdown is one of the main reasons that children become separated from their families, activities that promote income generation and family support are important to promote family strengthening.

Responding to Separated Children

Short term transitional care: A child who becomes separated from their parents is vulnerable to risks and exploitation. Short-term residential care can provide children with the physical, emotional, psychosocial and other holistic support that they need before being reunited with their families or placed in alternative family care. This type of care provides an important role in the restoration and rehabilitation of children, some of whom will have been traumatised by their experiences e.g. living on the streets, conflict or trafficking. It can also play a key role in reunification of children with their birth families or placing them in alternative family care.

Reunification: If a child becomes separated from their parents and it is safe and appropriate to do so, the best option is to try and reunite the child with their parents or other family members. This is called reunification. The process of reunification is made up of different steps, which starts with tracing the family, assessing the causes of the separation and addressing these, preparing the child and family to be reunited and following up the child once they are living back at home. If a child cannot be reunited with their birth family because it is considered unsafe or not in the best interests of the child, then alternative family based care can be considered.

Small Group Homes: Small group homes are where children can be cared for in smaller groups, (between 5-14 children) usually under the care of consistent live-in carers. They can provide a family like environment but are not considered to be the best long term option, which is to enable children to live with their family.

How to care for orphans and vulnerable children

Aim: Based on all the previous learnings, facilitate participants to generate an informal ‘continuum of care’ for their context (to include prevention of children being separated from their family, and responding to separated children in the short and long-term).

Facilitator Note Throughout the exercise, the facilitator should remind participants of the need to support efforts to keep children in, or return them to, the care of their family. Only if this fails should another appropriate and permanent solution be found. Also emphasise that the safety and best interests of the child are a priority.

Core activities

Activity 1) (5 minutes)

As a whole group, brainstorm scenarios that could result in a child being separated from his/her family. Display these. Group similar scenarios together.

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

Get participants to write their ideas for providing the best care for children in these sorts of situations on post-it notes / small pieces of paper (one idea per note). Remind them to consider how to avoid the situation resulting in separation in the first place.

While participants are writing, make an intervention time-line (early intervention/prevention - first response to separation - short-term provision - long-term provision) on a wall. Invite participants to attach their notes to the time-line at the appropriate position. Try to group similar approaches / interventions together.

Facilitator:

Talk through the stages of intervention. Read a selection of ideas for each stage of the time-line.

Choose one or two of the ideas and model how to think it through critically in the light of the UN guidelines / national legislation. Ask questions such as, ‘What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? When might this be effective? When might it not be effective? How can we ensure that children are reunited with their family? How can we create the best family environment for children in this situation?’

Activity 3 (20 minutes)

Provide a copy of the UN guidelines for participants to refer to if they need to.

Get participants to work in small groups. Each small group should focus on one stage of the time-line. (If there are enough groups, divide long-term care into two groups – one group for family reunification, one group for long-term care where reunification is not possible.) Ask participants to critically evaluate the different options for providing care for children at their stage. Encourage them to generate other possibilities based on their discussions if needed. Try to identify the best 3 approaches to caring for separated children / children at risk of separation and to write down what the main priorities should be for any programme.

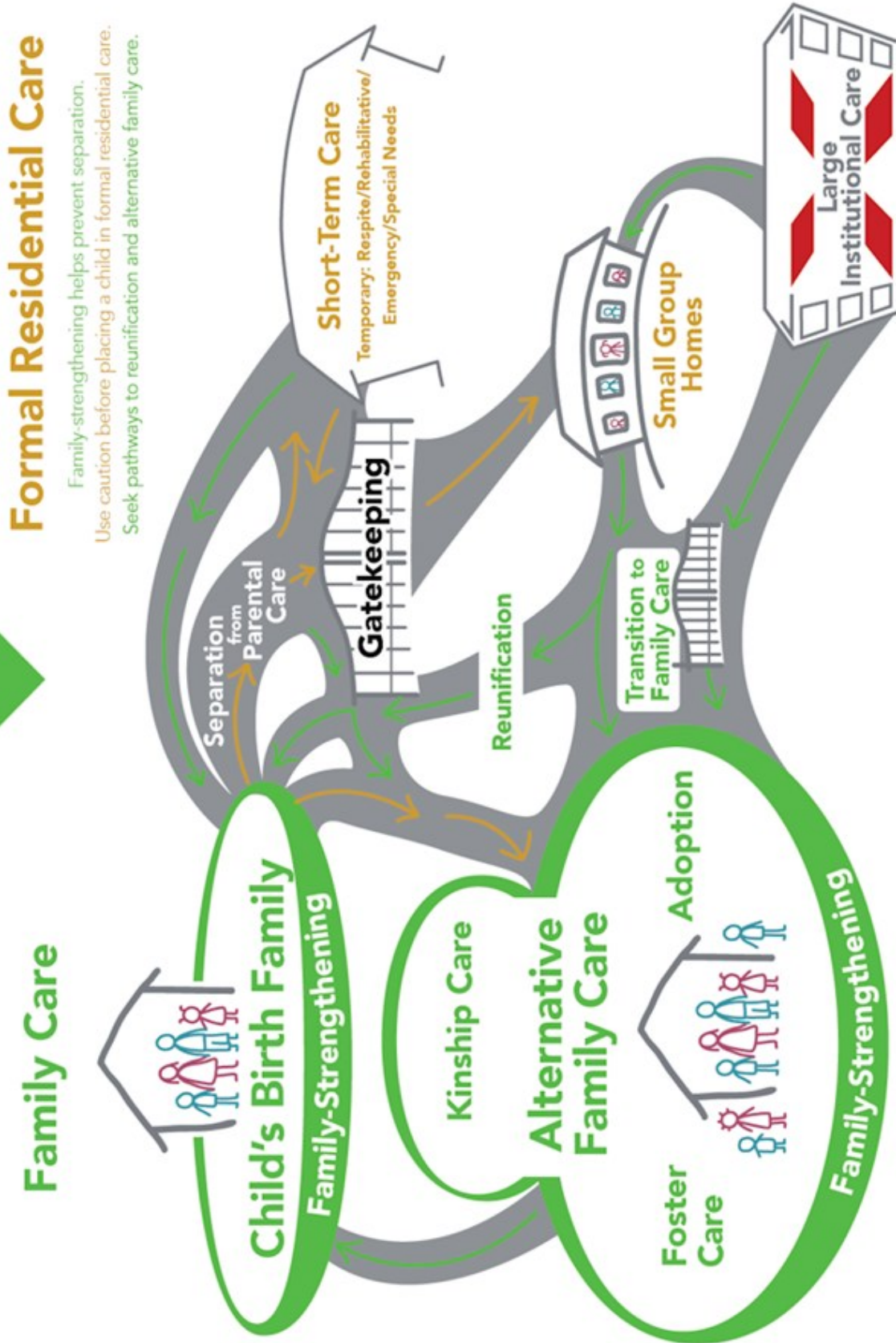
Feedback main priorities and reflections to the whole group. Encourage some discussion of how the different stages of response can be integrated and support each other.

By now, the group should have a good idea of a whole range of possible responses that are consistent with the UN guidelines. *Share the ‘Continuum of Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children’* handout. Compare the handout with the group’s own outcomes. Identify any significant differences in approach.

How to care for orphans and vulnerable children



A Continuum of Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children



Family-strengthening helps prevent separation. Use caution before placing a child in formal residential care. Seek pathways to reunification and alternative family care.

Working Together for Family Based Care

Facilitators Notes

We recognise that for many people, an emphasis on keeping children in families is a relatively new concept and may demand a shift in ways of working.

This may be especially so for those working in long term residential care homes for children. Our intention is not to undermine the work that you have been doing to serve vulnerable children, nor to question God's call on your life to do so. Our intention is to enhance the fulfilment of that call on your life by providing you with ways to have a more sustainable impact on the lives of many more children who could potentially pass through the doors of short term transitional care before being reunited with a family.

At the same time, Governments and donors are increasingly adopting the continuum of care model, which makes family placement or a family environment a necessity for children in care. National laws and donor funding priorities are changing to reflect this. It is likely that in the future, the orphanage model of care for children will need to change to align with national and international standards. Our desire is to be able to equip you to be able to make a transition to a new way of working, realising of course that this is a journey and it will take time.

Churches and organisations in Viva's partner networks are in a unique position to be able to support one another in transition and work together to provide a continuum of care for children. The issues facing children in today's world are enormous and as individuals it is difficult to tackle these alone. As a biblical principle, we are called to work together as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12). By working in collaboration with others, we can do so much more for children facing family separation than if we are working on our own.

We can do this by linking with churches and other believers in our neighbourhoods to help strengthen families and keep children within a family environment by offering families the support and encouragement they need. At the same time, we can be working with others to promote the best interests and protection of children in our communities. This includes working with and supporting local authorities to build child protection in our communities to keep children safe from harm.

Those children separated from their families need holistic care which usually requires the intervention of different service providers and ministries to be working in parallel for the benefit of the child. Meanwhile, Child Care Institutions and Churches can be working hand in hand to ensure that if children cannot be reintegrated back with their own family, that Church members can be offering loving and supportive families for those children in the form of fostering or adoption.

Such a co-ordinated response to the needs of separated children can be implemented through a network of Churches and Christian organisations. Each ministry in the network has a part to play in the continuum of care for separated children according to their calling, strength and experience.

Step One Having decided to embark on a journey that promotes children belonging in families, the first step is to gather with others who are doing similar work with children and have a heart for children belonging in families. In a network setting, this would involve **forming a working group or an action group**.

Step Two: Together the Action Group can identify the main **reasons** why children become separated from their families in the local context and understand the **national laws, guidelines and standards** that are relevant to work with children.

Step Three: Raise awareness with other network members about benefits of family care for children

Working Together

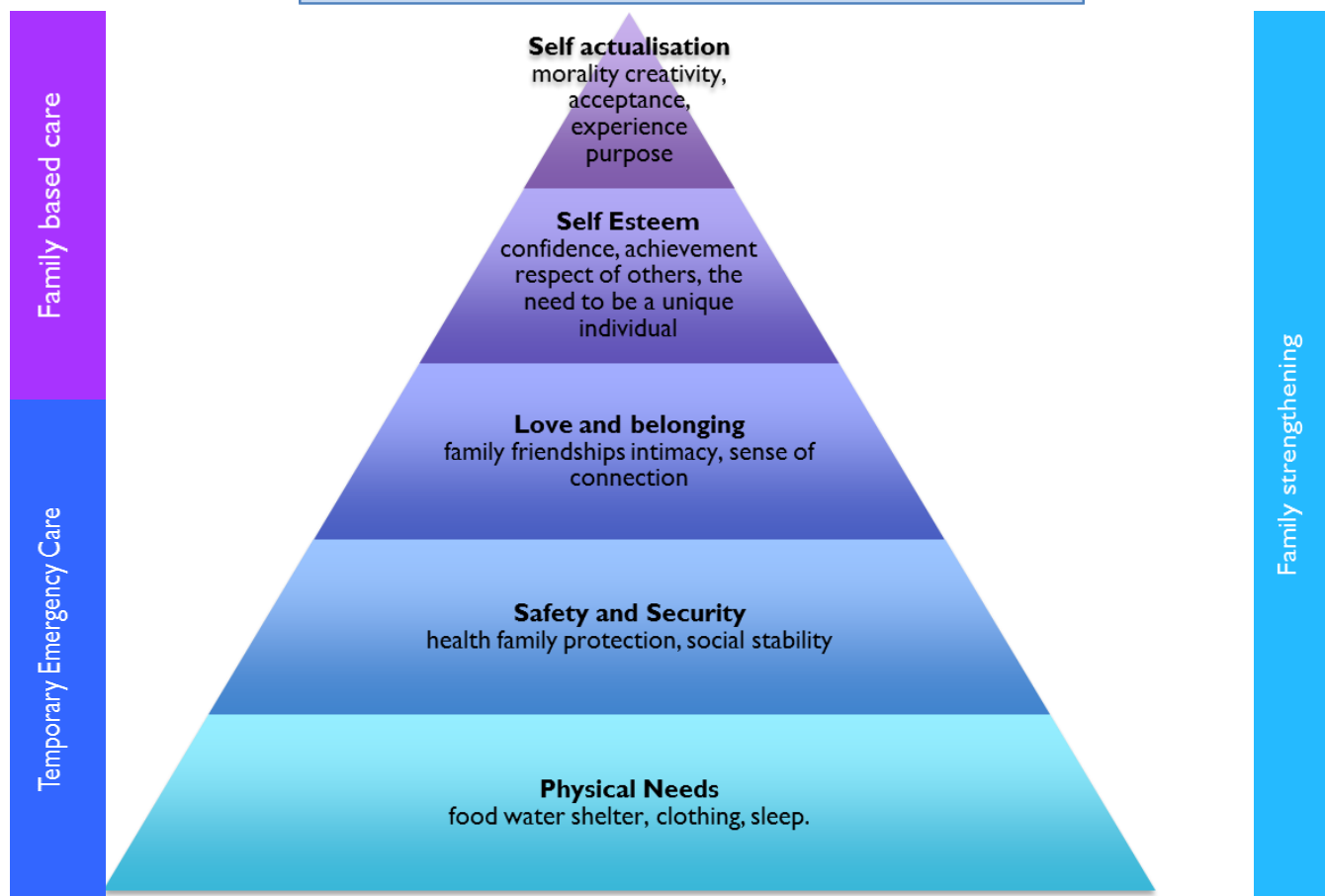
Aim: To facilitate network organisations and churches to work together for family based care



Activity I (15 minutes)

Revisit this expanded diagram of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Slide 19). Demonstrate how supporting children who are separated from their families and supporting children in families in different ways can help children to ascend the pyramid.

A City Without Orphans
Every child living in a safe loving family



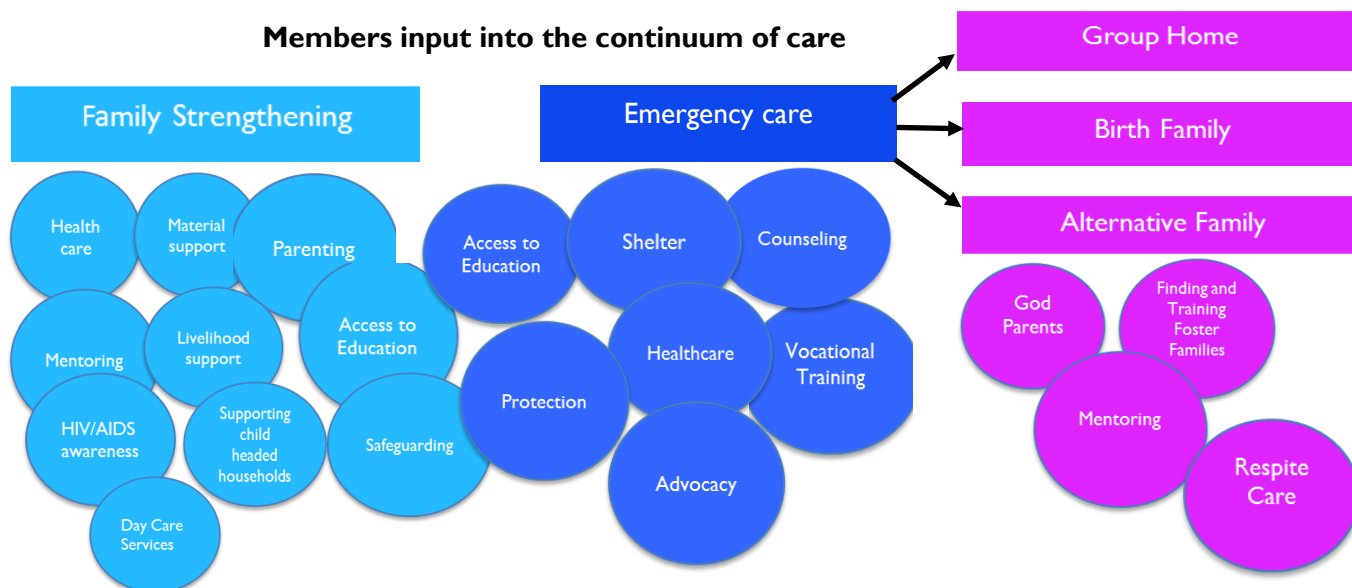
Supporting children who are separated from their families

Supporting children in families

Working Together

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

- Construct a diagram of the continuum of care and lay it on the floor. The diagram should include family strengthening, emergency care and family based care (group home, birth family, alternative family).
- Get each participant to reflect on where they could input and then write down on one piece of paper the activities or interventions that their organization or Church could have in the continuum of care for children. (See example below). Explain that by working together, network members can be enabling every child to live in a safe and loving family.



Optional activities

Activity 3 (25 minutes)

Get consensus or agreement whether this is something that the network would like to embark on.

- Step One:** Having decided to embark on a journey that promotes children belonging in families, **form a working group or an action group that can promote the concept through the network**
- Step Two:** Together the Action Group can identify the main **reasons** why children become separated from their families in the local context and understand the **national laws, guidelines and standards** that are relevant to work with children.
- Step Three:** Introduce **Why Families Matter** Bible study for Churches which looks at awareness raising with the Church on the importance of family, biblical study guide and children's activities. Introduce **Better Homes for Children** to help Churches and organisations know how to go about the process of preventing family separation and family strengthening and how Child care institutions can a) make the transition from long term care to short term emergency care, b) provide relevant support and care for traumatised children d) provide family based accommodation e) engage in family tracing and family reunification f) find alternative families for children.
- Step Four:** Put together a plan to **raise awareness** with other network members about benefits of family care for children

Conclusion

Core
activities

Reflect and Pray

Get a strong reader to read Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. Invite participants to pray this prayer for one another and for the children in their care.

A Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21



Viva, Unit 8, The Gallery, 54 Marston Street, Oxford, OX4 1LF, UK
+44 (0) 1865 811660 | info@viva.org | www.viva.org

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